

McNamara cable to CINCSAC, May 1961 DE Draft

The deterrent effectiveness of our military forces will depend upon their ability to respond successfully to thermonuclear war emergency in any of its foreseeable forms. This will require, among other things, that the highest national authority be capable of selecting the response ~~that~~ which will provide the United States and its Allies the maximum possible advantage in the specific circumstances under which deterrence may fail. It is my belief that the ability to select from among a wide range of feasible response options suited to specific circumstances could permit the United States and its Allies to ~~survive~~ ^(achieve its warlike objectives) in thermonuclear war, in a position enabling resumed progress toward their common ^{future} objectives, with casualties and damage reduced significantly below levels which might otherwise be expected.

It is my intention to encourage and support plans and programs which will in the future provide a posture affording such a wide latitude of response options, ^{conceivable} especially of selection and control for maximum advantage. Concurrently with improvements in our posture, it should be possible to reflect in basic policies and war plans, to the degree made feasible by progress toward the requisite capabilities, provisions for increased latitude in options for selective response to thermonuclear war emergency.

I am, therefore, also interested in prospects for the shorter term time period. The currently effective Single Integrated Operational Plan for strategic attack (SIOP-62) ~~permits~~ provides a variety of options/contingencies for response by forces committed to strategic offensive tasks, keyed principally to duration of warning, geographic discretion, constraints, and specifics of weather and visibility. Similar latitude is ~~provided~~ in other atomic war plans.

It is requested that the Joint Chiefs of Staff cause the Director of Strategic Target Planning to scrutinize the current SIOP-62 and forces committed to its execution, and that other appropriate Commanders-in-Chief similarly scrutinize their own.

scrutiny will be to provide answers to us on the following:

- a. To what specific extent might it be feasible in the near term 1961-1962 time period to provide a wider latitude of options for response to thermonuclear war emergency, assuming that any impediments to this action embodied in the current National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy were removed?
- b. If such additional options are deemed feasible, and desirable, what would be the prudent and realistic time schedule for their earliest integration into current plans?
- c. If such additional options would depend upon changes in capabilities, would any such changes be feasible of accomplishment at reasonable cost and effort in the near term, and what specific actions would be necessary?
- d. What capabilities presently lacking would be the principal requirements for a future posture permitting a wide variety of response options calculated to derive maximum advantage from any of the reasonably foreseeable circumstances under which deterrence to central war might fail?
- e. Are there any other major problems or difficulties foreseen, in light of the recognized necessity to avoid any disruption in the continuity of our current war plans and capabilities, which could weaken the overall deterrent posture?

Of specific interest would be assessment of the possibilities affecting the early development of options which might permit avoidance of attacks against enemy urban-industrial and population resources as such in initial attacks; options which would permit exclusion from initial attack, to the extent feasible, of one or more member nations of the Sino-Soviet bloc without the necessity for replanning the balance of the attack; options which would relieve selected elements of ready forces

from initial attack assignments to permit their retention as uncommitted ready reserves for possible subsequent use; options providing varying degrees of adjustment, beyond those currently planned, in force posture during periods of critical tension; and so forth.

Response by 15 June 1961 will be appreciated.

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- c. If such additional options would depend upon changes in capabilities, would any such changes be feasible of accomplishment at reasonable cost and effort in the near term, and what specific actions would be necessary?
- d. What capabilities, presently ~~lacking~~ ^{not} ~~presently~~ ^{available} would be the principal requirements for a future posture permitting a wide variety of response options calculated to derive maximum advantage from any of the reasonably foreseeable circumstances under which deterrence ~~to~~ ^{of} central war might fail?
- e. Are there any other major problems or difficulties foreseen, in light of the recognized necessity to avoid any disruption in the continuity of our current war plans and capabilities, which could weaken the overall ~~deterrent~~ posture?

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